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ABSTRACT

A study of the relationship between language learners' attitudes and their development of language proficiency was based on a survey of 50 Yugoslavian university students of English as a Second Language (ESL). The subjects were taking English to fulfill a second language requirement. They were first administered two written attitudinal surveys in their English classes (the short form of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension and a variant designed to obtain similar information about communication apprehension levels when speaking English in a variety of contexts, including the classroom). Subjects were then interviewed in English concerning why they were studying English, and again completed another survey that tests communication apprehension immediately after a stress-producing communicative experience. All surveys were administered in Serbo-Croatian. Analysis of the survey results suggests that the survey type and the context of its administration influence whether or not it will support a linear, causal perspective on the attitude-proficiency relationship. An alternative model of the attitude proficiency relationship, focusing on the learner's first impression of the target language, is proposed. Survey data are appended and 33 references are cited. (MSE)

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THE ATTITUDE-PROFICIENCY RELATIONSHIP: A NON-LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

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THE ATTITUDE-PROFICIENCY RELATIONSHIP:
A NON-LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

In looking over the title and abstract that I sent to the Abstract Committee a year ago, I realize now that the onus of responsibility is on me to explain a key term in the title. In other words, what is a non-linear perspective towards the attitude/proficiency relationship? So that I may answer this question to everyone's satisfaction, I have decided to divide my talk into three parts: 1) assumptions in the field as to the relationship between attitude and proficiency, 2) the work I've done thus far on this particular topic, and 3) conclusions that can be drawn from this work that have led me to develop a non-linear perspective.

The field of second language acquisition has had an interest in variance in language learner achievement for a very long time. We are constantly attempting to determine which elements in the language learning process have the greatest impact upon linguistic and communicative proficiency. The most common approach to this issue is to link variables together into a hypothetical linear processing model. Often the degree to which certain environmental, linguistic, and cognitive variables are present in the language learner's linguistic environment are considered by the field to determine the presence or absence of other variables. Some of these cause and effect relationships frequently represented as determining the learner's eventual level of proficiency. Schumann (1978), Carroll (1981), Krashen (1982), Giles and Byrne (1982), and Gardner (1985) have all provided us with examples of this type of model. It is particularly important to note that each of these models represent the language learning process as being initiated within the learner, or, more specifically, from his or her motivational level, personality, and attitude towards any one of the many elements of the learning environment, and

as continuing because of the effect of the interaction of these variables with the learning environment in a linear fashion. Logistically, this is sensible, because language learning requires both a learner and a time frame, mandating a linear perspective upon the overall learning process. However, this representation of language learning also requires that researchers assume that language learning achievement is attributable to the effect learner variables have on other elements in the process (such as linguistic and sociocultural input or classroom methodology). Indeed, Krashen's (1982) monitor model is one logical result of such a supposition.

In the Monitor Model, Krashen represents both language acquisition and language learning as the result of the relationship between input and learner aptitude (in language learning) or input and the affective filter (in language acquisition). The affective filter is of particular interest here because Krashen and Terrell (1983) posit, in their discussions of the implications of the Monitor Model for pedagogy, that an analysis of the linguistic output of two language acquirers who have been exposed to precisely the same linguistic output will indicate that the learner who has acquired more linguistic information is the one with the lower Affective Filter. Essentially, the affective filter is presented in these and other discussions (Krashen, 1981; Krashen, Burt, and Dulay, 1982; Krashen, 1985) as the element in the language acquisition process responsible for variance in linguistic outcomes, because it consists of "motivations and aptitudes (which) if they are less than optimal may filter out certain aspects of the input...." (Burt and Dulay, 1977, p. 110). In other words, only learners with lowered (i. e. less dominant) affective filters can be expected to attain optimal linguistic proficiency, even in ideal learning environments.

The strength of such claims requires that they be investigated more close-

ly, for if it is the case that variance in linguistic outcomes is entirely dependent upon a cluster of attitudinal and motivational variables, then it should be a relatively simple process to identify, based on their attitudes, learners who one would anticipate to have difficulty attaining optimal linguistic proficiency. Yet, the relationship between tested learner attitude and proficiency has only appeared in certain investigations (Clement, Smythe, and Gardner, 1980; Gardner, 1983; Gardner, Lalonde, and Pierson, 1983; Laine, 1987 [Gardner (1985) provides a summary of others]), but not in others (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Teitelbaum, Edwards, and Hudson, 1975; Backmann, 1977; Chihara and Oller, 1978; Oller, Baca, and Vigil, 1977; Oller, Hudson, and Liu, 1977; Oller, Perkins, and Murakami, 1980; Pierson, Fu, and Lee, 1980).

When many of these contradictory findings were published in the 1970s and 80s, most researchers involved in the controversy questioned the appropriacy of the statistical methods used in individual studies, the labelling of factors isolated by different researchers using widely discrepant techniques as identical, or the nature of the questionnaire used to isolate attitudinal constructs. However, one assumption was never questioned--that the representation of the language learning process as a linear cause-and-effect relationship between attitudes and proficiency was the most accurate representation. Maintaining this assumption allowed researchers to freely design surveys which tested any particular group of attitudinal constructs because it was assumed that all learner atttitudes towards the target language or themselves as language learners stood in a causal relationship to their proficiency.

However, this linear cause-and-effect language learning model fails to inerringly inform a researcher as to which attitude towards the language learning process might be in effect at which point of that process. This is a major flaw which may contribute to poor survey design, according to Ajzen and

Fishbein (1977). These two social psychologists have posited that in order for an attitudinal survey to accurately isolate attitudinal factors with high predictive strength, the questions isolating attitudinal constructs and constructs which predict the subjects' future behavior need to be similar in terms of action, target, context, and time. In other words, in order for an attitudinal survey to be predictive, it must only question subjects about attitudes that will come into play when the subject performs the behavior under investigation (such as speaking the target language). By this criteria, questions in an attitudinal survey that ask learners about their attitudes towards the target language and its speakers or the target culture may not relate to the action, target, context, or time of their actual language use. By this criteria, Gardner and Smythe's AMI (1975), with its questions concerning the learners' attitudes towards French-Canadians, interest in foreign languages, attitudes towards European French, attitudes towards learning French, orientation, French class anxiety, and parental attitude towards the study of French, or Gardner's (1985) socio-educational test, with its questions concerning motivational intensity, desire to learn French, and evaluations of the teacher and classroom, or Spolsky's (1969) indirect measure of learner orientation, with its Likert ratings of self, ideal self, native and target cultures, all contain serious flaws in terms of being appropriate attitudinal surveys for many populations. There is enough variation (and enough discrepant findings) in the area of second language acquisition to warrant a less comprehensive and hopefully more predictive approach to the study of the attitude-proficiency relationship. It was precisely this issue that motivated me to begin my investigation of EFL learners in Yugoslavia, in an attempt to develop an attitudinal survey with greater predictive power across a wider spectrum of language learning populations.

In order to develop this survey, I established a set of working assumptions that I felt were appropriate for both the research interests I had and the context in which the survey would be administered. First of all, I felt it essential not to assume the presence of an affective filter or any particular cluster of attitudes towards target language speakers, either linguistically or culturally in my test population. I did this for two reasons: 1) because evidence presented to date has not convinced me of such a filter's existence, and 2) because I intended to follow Ajzen and Fishbein's criteria for attitudinal surveys. So I chose not to design survey questions that tested for the presence or absence of any particular set of attitudes external to the learning environment itself.

I did, however, recognize that no attitudinal survey is free of theoretical assumptions. Two general constructs guided my decision as to what to test. First of all, I assumed that my subjects, Yugoslav students studying English in order to complete their foreign language requirement, would have the classroom as their most significant language learning environment, and that their attitudes towards that classroom would be the most relevant and predictive. While I also intended to evaluate their attitudes towards English use in other contexts, I drew most heavily upon research concerning language learner attitudes towards classroom language learning in designing my survey. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) have hypothesized, given the results of their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Survey, that a significant percentage of students view their foreign language classrooms as threatening environments. Foss and Reitzel (1988) have developed a more elaborate hypothesis, stating that a student's perception of his or her own performance, and, by extension, his or her own competence in the classroom context plays an important role in their actual success in the classroom.

The second construct that played a significant role in my determination of the nature of a student's self-perception and evaluation process was the cognitive/assessment model of motivation as first articulated by Bandura (1977) and its later expansions by Saltzer (1982), Heckhausen (1982), and Von Cranach and Walach (1984). All of these models base much of the human behavioral decision-making process upon perceptions of one's own efficacy (or ability to accomplish goals). Variance in human behavior in apparently identical contexts among seemingly equally capable individuals is explained in these models as the result of cognitive processes within the individual that define similar stimuli or environments in distinctive ways. In the language learning context, these models would represent the primary factor which determines the language learner's behavior (and, eventually, his or her proficiency) to be his or her perception of his or her capabilities in that context, his or her attitudes towards the target language and culture, which may still be in the process of forming, only indirectly affect proficiency, and only when they affect the learner's perception of his or her own efficacy.

Finally, I decided that my initial analysis of any sort of attitude/proficiency ralationship should be limited to a few manipulable constructs, both in order to satisfy Ajzen and Fishbein's criteria for attitudinal surveys, and to make the task of correlation a little easier. I had considered the communication anxiety (or apprehension) construct to be applicable to second language acquisition research before Foss and Reitzel published their article in the September 1988 edition of TESOL Quarterly. McCroskey, a speech communication researcher, had developed the communication apprehension construct in an attempt to diagnose and work with individuals who experience debilitating anxiety in communication situations. He characterized it (1982) as "a person's level of fear or anxiety associated with any form of communication with

other people" (p. 139). He also claimed that communication apprehension can either occur in all social interactions or only for particular individuals in particular environments. This aspect of the communication apprehension construct appealed to me because of the similarities I saw between what McCroskey called situational communicational anxiety, Krashen's affective filter, and Gardner's socio-educational model of the relationship between attitudes, motivation, and proficiency. McCroskey viewed communication apprehension as debilitating, preventing otherwise competent individuals from communicating effectively or satisfactorily. Both Krashen's and Gardner's models predict that a subject with negative attitudinal responses to the learning environment would not be as proficient as one might expect, given other aspects of his or her background. I felt that if either of these SLA models were truly predictive of the language learning process, then a survey designed to test a communicator's anxiety level towards a communicative situation would be an appropriate attitudinal measure for a language learning context. And if this proved not to be the case, then that information would be interesting as well.

I drew upon two surveys in developingy my own attitudinal survey: McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, a survey that had been determined, after an extensive series of studies, to accurately isolate high, normal, and low levels of communication apprehension, and Richmond's (1978) State Communication Apprehension Measure, a survey that asks subjects to categorize their immediate reaction to a communicative event using a Likert scale. I then developed a three-step evaluative procedure that I intended to use in my investigation of the attitude/proficiency relationship for a group of Yugoslav EFL students. Specifically, I wanted to determine the relationship (if any existed between communication apprehension levels in an English-speaking context and English oral proficiency for this particular population.

Fifty undergraduate students from the Economics Department at the University of Mostar, Mostar, Yugoslavia were selected as subjects for this experiment, because they were enrolled in English courses in order to fulfill the language requirement for their degree. 78% of the subjects were enrolled in the first year course of English for economists, and 22% were enrolled in the second year course. 74% of the subjects were female and 26% were male.

The subjects were first administered two written attitudinal surveys in their English classes: the short form of the PRCA (a control test to determine if the other two attitudinal surveys only tested general anxiety levels of this population; McCroskey, 1977) and an ESL variant designed to obtain similar information about the subjects' communication apprehension levels when speaking English in a variety of contexts, including the classroom. Both surveys had been translated into Serbo-Croatian by an accredited translator and administered in Serbo-Croatian by that same translator (who was also the students' language teacher). The students were also requested to complete a simple cover page (also written in Serbo-Croatian) giving their name, age, years completed of English study, and if they were studying English as a course requirement or for their major.

The subjects were then asked to participate in a short interview session with me, a native English speaker, who they had never met before. During this session they were required to answer a few questions about why they were studying English and complete another survey. Each subject spent approximately five minutes with me and answered the same five or six questions designed to investigate their language background and motivation for learning English more specifically, in English (i. e. Who encouraged you to study English?) I also ranked the subjects, using the FSI oral interview scale, during the interview. Afterwards, the subjects completed a third attitudinal survey patterned after

Richmond's state communication apprehension survey (1979), which tests a subject's level of communication apprehension immediately after a stress-producing communicative experience. This survey was also translated into Serbo-Croatian for greater accuracy.

Sociometrically, these subjects had some predicted similarities. All of them were from within a 100-mile radius of Mostar and their native language was either the Herzogovinan dialect of Serbo-Croatian or Croatian. (One subject had been born in Canada and one in Germany. Both had to learn Serbo-Croatian when they moved back to Yugoslavia, but they were clear exceptions.) As all of them were university students, they had all completed secondary school and satisfied the secondary school diploma's foreign language requirements, although the nature of these requirements varied widely because of the technical diversification of the Yugoslav secondary school system. 74% of the subjects claimed that they were studying English because of their own personal interest in the subject, and not because the university required them to do do to meet the requirements for a degree in Economics.

The widest range of diversity among these subjects was found in looking at their secondary school background. The subjects indicated a total of fourteen different specializations during interviews, ranging from horticulture to computer programming. Another distinction among subjects was that 40% had studied English for nine years, including the year they were examined, while others had studied English for six or seven years prior to enrolling in the course. Perhaps the most interesting differentiation among subjects was their range of English oral proficiency. 34% of the subjects fell into the 0-0+ categories of oral proficiency, 26% into the 1-1+ categories, and 26% into the 2-2+ categories. (14% of the subjects did not come to the oral interview and could not be evaluated.

In terms of English usage outside of class, the population was fairly evenly divided. 56% of the students didn't speak English outside of class, and only 62% listened to English (on the radio or television) outside of class.

Percentages, means, and standard deviations for each question on all three surveys was calculated, and correlations and factor analyses between all three surveys using the SPSS-X statistical package. Correlations were also run between factors determined to be significant after analyses and the subjects' oral proficiency as established by the interview. (All claims of statistical significance in this study are at the Pearson .05 level.) The intent of all these analyses was two-fold: 1) to determine which questions most clearly indicated the relationship between subjects' state and trait communication apprehension and their proficiency, and 2) to determine the nature of that relationship more precisely.

As the PRCA has been tested on a wide variety of populations and found to be valid, and is considered a diagnostic test of communication apprehension I assumed that this population's responses to PRCA questions would distribute themselves along a normal curve, and that only a minority of the population experiences communication apprehension when speaking their native language. This, by and large, was the case. The only set of responses which did not follow this pattern were responses to Question 8, I dislike using my body and voice expressively. Subject response to this question fell into a bimodal curve, a split more likely indicating personality distinctions than anything peculiar to the interview situation.

In contrast, the PRCA/ESL survey, while resembling the PRCA in format, was designed to both isolate specific elements of communication apprehension and provide information that could be correlated to subjects' oral proficiency. As Foss and Reitzel (1988) had claimed that communication apprehension

experienced when speaking a second language was similar to other types of communication apprehension, I had originally anticipated that responses to the PRCA/ESL survey would follow the same patterns as responses to the PRCA survey, albeit with some situational intensification because of the difficulties inherent in speaking a second language. Therefore, I expected subject response to PRCA/ESL questions to fall into a normal curve, skewed in the direction of an overall negative response to communicating in English. This, however, was not the case.

The only PRCA/ESL survey questions to which responses were distributed along a normal curve were Question 1, I dislike talking English with groups of people, Question 4, I like to get involved in group discussions in English, and Question 17, I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence. Responses to many of the other questions were distributed bimodally. Question 2, Generally, I am comfortable while talking in English with groups of people, Question 3, I am tense and nervous while talking with people in English, Question 3, Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous, Question 6, I am calm and relaxed while talking with groups of people in English, Question 13, I have no fear of speaking in English class and Question 18, While speaking English in class, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know all had a bimodal distribution of responses, which indicated a possible proficiency effect.

Responses to the rest of the questions were skewed, although not always in the direction predicted. Question 7, When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous, Question 8, I have no fear of speaking in English, Question 9, Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous when speaking English, and Question 12, I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English all produced responses skewed in the opposite direction from what was predicted. But Ques-

tion 10, Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous when speaking English, and Question 11, When speaking English with a stranger, I feel very relaxed did not. All of these questions relate to emotional states experienced while speaking English, and many contain the adverb very. This appeared to make the questions excessively strong for most subjects.

Subject response to the state test of communicative apprehension resembled neither the response to the PRCA nor the PRCA/ESL. While the majority of responses were distributed along some sort of normal curve, many of these curves were skewed, and not in the direction predicted. Subjects tended to select positive adjectives and reject negative adjectives when describing the interview. They overwhelmingly selected friendly atmosphere (78%), relaxed (60%), cheerful (54%), and entertaining (60%), and rejected angry (60% not at all angry), nervous (58%), tired (76%), uneasy (72%), sweating and shaking (70%), and horrified (80%) as appropriate descriptors of their experience.

In summary, each survey appeared to be testing a slightly different type of response, which would be logical, as the topic, context, and administration of each survey was slightly different. I initially assumed, however, that each set of responses would correlate to every other set, as each survey was designed to test some form of communication apprehension. But Pearson product/moment correlations at .05 significance indicated the presence of significant relationships between the attitudes evaluated by the PRCA/ESL survey and the state survey and no significant relationships between the attitudes evaluated in the PRCA survey and those evaluated in the other two surveys. More specifically, questions concerning speaking English in the classroom (PRCA/ESL questions 13 through 18) correlated significantly with state survey questions, most frequently with the adjectives relaxed, frightened, uncertain, and entertained. It must be noted, however, that positive state adjectives,

such as relaxed, did not correlate positively with positive PRCA/ESL questions, such as I have no fear of speaking in English class, and negative state adjectives, such as frightened and tense, correlated both positively and negatively to Questions 1, 3, 6, 7, and classroom context questions. Another point of interest was PRCA/ESL question 8, I have no fear of speaking English. This statement had a positive correlation with the adjectives tired, frightened, uneasy, embarassed, awkward, uncertain, entertained, and tense, and a negative correlation with the adjectives relaxed, energetic, sweating and shaking, and uncertain, the largest number of correlations for any single question.

In order to analyze these correlations, and to determine which variables produced the lack of correlations between the PRCA and the other surveys, I factor analyzed all three surveys. Each survey was analyzed in conjunction with the other two, with Eigenvalues considered to be significant if greater than one. Although I initially isolated eight factors from the PRCA-PRCA/ESL correlations, nine for PRCA-state survey correlations, and nine for PRCA/ESL-state correlations, charting the percentage of variance accounted for by each significant factor led me to isolate three primary factors from each correlation.

A bipolar tension/relaxation response was the most significant factor in PRCA-PRCA/ESL correlations (PRCA/ESL survey Questions 3, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, and 17), accounting for 30% of subject response variance. PRCA/ESL Questions 3 and 7 isolated the second most significant factor, a negative response to to speaking English to strangers, accounting for 14% of the variance. The third factor, shyness, was isolated by PRCA Question 9, accounting for 9% of the variance.

The factor analysis of PRCA-state survey correlations indicated even more strongly that very few PRCA questions directly evaluated communication appre-

hension in an English-speaking context. Once again, the first factor isolated was a bipolar tension-relaxation response, consisting of the adjectives relaxed, nervous, frightened, embarassed, calm, and tense from the state survey. This factor accounted for 13% of the variance. The second factor, physical discomfort when speaking English, was isolated by the state survey adjectives tired and uneasy, and accounted for 13% of the variance. The third factor, the social isolate indicator, was slightly bipolar and was isolated by PRCA Questions 2 and 6. This factor accounted for 7% of the variance in subject response.

The factor analysis of the PRCA/ESL-state survey correlations yielded some unexpected results. Perhaps the most obvious indication that these surveys, despite correlations between individual questions, were not testing the response set, is that questions from each survey loaded into separate factors. No responses to PRCA/ESL questions designed to indicate the presence of tensions cross-loaded with responses to adjectives such as tense and nervous. The first factor isolated, tension when interviewed, consisted of the above-mentioned adjectives and frightened, embarassed, and uncertain. It accounted for 39% of the variance. The second factor, tension/relaxation experienced in the English-speaking context, accounting for 12% of the variance, was isolated by PRCA/ESL questions 3, 9, 10, and 17. The third factor, physical discomfort when interviewed, was isolated by the adjectives tired and uneasy and accounted for 6% of the variance.

In order to determine which of these factors, if any, had a significant relationship with the tested oral proficiency of this group of subjects, Pearson product/moment correlations between these factors and the FSI oral interview scores were done. Each subject had previously been ranked into one of three broad categories of proficiency: 0-0+ (34%), 1-1+ (26%), and 2-2+ (26%).

These correlations revealed that only the first factor in each group had a significant correlation to the subjects' oral proficiency, eliminating the need for any further consideration of the PRCA as an evaluative tool in the investigation of the second language attitude/proficiency relationship.

As two of the significant factors were bipolar, providing a less than clear indication as to whether relaxation or tension had a greater effect upon a subject's oral proficiency, I decided to look more closely at the distribution of subject response to the questions that made up the bipolar factors based upon subject proficiency. If a strong version of a linear, causal attitude-proficiency relationship were to hold true, then subject response to questions should show an attitudinal shift. In other words, 0-0+ proficiency subjects should be expected to agree strongly with questions that indicated feelings of anxiety and tension in English-speaking contexts, while 2-2+ proficiency subjects should be less likely to agree with these questions, but more likely to agree with questions that indicate some comfort in speaking English. A closer analysis of Factors One and Two in this fashion led me to some interesting conclusions not predicted by any strong interpretation of a causal attitude-proficiency relationship.

Factor One, the bipolar tension/relaxation response isolated by seven PRCA/ESL questions, showed a clear attitudinal shift as proficiency level increased. As can clearly be seen on Chart Number 5, the majority of 0-0+ proficiency subjects claim to experience tension in both English classes and English-speaking contexts in general, while 2-2+ subjects claimed the opposite. However, responses to Factor Two, which the strong interpretation of a linear, causal attitude-proficiency relationship would predict to follow the same pattern, did not. The majority of 0-0+ proficiency subjects felt relaxed, did not feel nervous, frightened, embarassed, or tense, and were neutral about

the adjectives calm and uncertain. The only attitudinal shift in evidence for 2-2+ proficiency subjects was that they were more positive about the experience than 0-0+ proficiency subjects were.

What conclusions can be drawn from these findings? Clearly, on a more obvious level, one can conclude that the type of survey one writes and the context it is administered in has a major effect upon whether or not its findings will support a linear, causal perspective on the attitude-proficiency relationship. But this conclusion says less about which of these surveys is based upon an accurate picture of the relationship than it does about the accuracy of traditional models of the relationship themselves. A language learning model that cannot predict that, in certain contexts, subjects with virtually no proficiency in English will respond positively to an oral interview in English with a stranger has very little predictive power, in my opinion.

Before presenting an alternative model of the attitude-proficiency relationship, however, some specific elements of this research project must be taken into consideration. First of all, comments by Yugoslav colleagues such as Mujic (1990) and Oller and Perkins' (1978) concerns about subject willingness to please the researcher (in this case, a young smiling foreigner who was asking them a few personal questions) do indicate that, for these students, this oral interview was a unique evaluative experience, which might have led them to respond more positively to the test questions than they would have under other circumstances. However, it is quite unlikely that the subjects would have selected a consistently strongly favorable response to the interview just to please me, and certainly not all 0-0+ proficiency students would have consistently claimed to have enjoyed something that they found intolerable!

After working with this data, I have begun to develop what I call an "interactive" model of the relationship between learner attitudes and proficiency

in a target language. Just as Spolsky has claimed that the "interplay between learner and situation determines LINGUISTIC AND NONLINGUISTIC OUTCOMES for the learner" (1988, p. 387), so I claim that the interaction of attitude, self-perception, and evaluation of one's own performance in the language learning context that are the primary determinants of how individual variance within a given environment occurs. While I do accept the notion that variance among language learner populations can be explained by a combination of socio-economic and contextual factors, particularly populations learning languages spoken by cultures that they have some contact with (ESL, minority language speakers, and immersion program students, for example) a substantial number of language learners throughout the world (most EFL learners, for instance) are presently studying a foreign language spoken by cultures with which they have no contact outside of the mass media. For this population, and, I suspect, for many others, whatever attitudinal constructs they may have formed of the target language and culture are frequently subsumed by more immediate issues for the learner such as his or her perceived current proficiency level in comparison with the perceived proficiency level expected by the teacher, among other things. A comprehensive model of the relationship betwen learner attitude and proficiency needs to take this into consideration.

The foundation of this model is the learner's initial impression of the target language. My Yugoslav students tell me that their first impressions of English were formed from either an older brother or sister's demonstration of what they had learned in English class, or their own first attempts to please their English teacher, a Yugoslav. I would expand this image by hypothesizing that most language learners base their initial attitudinal constructs about language learning not so much on external information about the target culture but on their perceptions of the target language. The reciprocal effect of

communication in that language very quickly allows the beginning learner to expand that overall impression of what the language is like into a more organized impression of his or her performance as a speaker of that language, constantly modified by further interaction and feedback.

Although I could easily, at this point, make a transition to a Krashen-like advocacy of pedagogical strategies that would modify this attitudinal construct of a beginning learner so that he or she can continue to learn, this is not what I consider the interactive model to imply. Not all initial language learning experiences are negative, although many can be, as Foss and Reitzel (1988) have pointed out. The affective filter hypothesis doesn't allow for the learner who perceives, given the information available to him or her, that progress is being made (even though, "objectively", very little actual linguistic progress is taking place). And the affective filter hypothesis does not predict the results obtained in my study, and most likely cannot predict the actual relationship between attitude and proficiency for many other language learning populations. Therefore, making any sort of pedagogical decisions as to the best way to teach any group of learners that is based solely upon a hypothesized attitude/proficiency relationship is premature, and I will refrain from doing so at this point.

However, it seems possible to me to claim at this point that, as the learner continues studying the language, he or she will normally develop a more or less accurate perception of progress made based on three criteria: 1) his or her perception of the nature of the objective, the target language, 2) his or her perception of how closely his or her performance approximates that objective, and 3) his or her perception of how closely informatiion from the learning environment corresponds to his or her self-evaluation. The term "learning environment" in this context does not imply a particular methodology or teach-

ing strategy, but rather a specific, external language learning context against which his or her perceptions of the language and his or her progress is evaluated. The learning environment for my Yugoslav language learners is the classroom, but it can be practically any context where exposure to the target language takes place. It must be noted here as well that the learner's perception of all three aspects is as significant, if not more, than any set of criteria external to the learner. This is important for two reasons: 1) it allows for individual learners to adjust their perceptions of the target language and their performance of it based on new information, a process necessary for further learning, and 2) it eliminates the necessity of developing any particular set of hypothetical attitudinal constructs beforehand, a process that occasionally biases the results. Both performance and attitude fluctuate over time for most language learners, particularly when they are first beginning to learn, and my model can account for this; the others cannot.

Of course, for this model to be both descriptive and predictive, it must account for the fact that frequently learners with negative attitudes and low motivation for language learning are ultimately less proficient than those with positive attitudes. Some learners eventually establish a perceptual conconstruct of their language learning experience that is less positive, often in conjunction with low levels of performance. This is logical because the learner's evaluation of his or her performance often corresponds to an external observer's evaluation of that performance. However, just because the learner has both a negative attitude and low proficiency, this does not indicate that the attitude caused the proficiency. The two interact with each other, as do all variables in the language learning process. The perception of one element as the cause of another is an artifact of setting up a model of language learning a priori. In contrast, the interactive model allows for atti-

tudes in certain learning contexts to inform learning (or the lack of it), and an external or internal evaluation of performance to inform an attitudinal construct. The researcher who uses an interactive model must develop a hypothesis as to what type of interactive relationship is present in a particular language learning environment and then test the accuracy of this hypothesis, rather than attempting to prove the validity of a comprehensive cause-and-effect model of the attitude/proficiency relationship for all learning situations.

In conclusion, attitudes towards language learning and linguistic proficiency are connected, but not necessarily in a cause-and-effect relationship. The task of the researcher when analyzing this connection is to improve the accuracy in predicting points of influence, given the wide variety of language learning contexts that exist.

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Lisa Harshbarger
AIIA '90

PRCA SURVEY

	S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
1. I look forward to expressing myself in meetings.	14	32	26	24	2
2. I am afraid to express myself in a group.		16	30	36	16
3. I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public.		16	40	32	10
4. Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform.	4	14	28	40	12
5. I always avoid speaking in public.	8	16	30	36	8
6. I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most people are.	2	16	42	32	6
7. I like to get involved in group discussion.	18	38	32	8	
8. I dislike using my body and voice expressively.	14	24	14	38	18
9. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.		4	12	40	42
10. I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local TV show.	4	8	50	24	12

PRCA/ESL SURVEY

	S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
1. I dislike talking in English with groups of people.	2	22	46	28	2
2. Generally, I am comfortable while talking in English with groups of people.	4	38	18	38	2
3. I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English.	12	30	20	34	4
4. I like to get involved in group discussions in English.	6	24	40	28	2
5. Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous.	8	36	22	26	8
6. I am calm and relaxed when talking with groups of people in English.		26	22	44	8
7. When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.	8	22	24	30	16
8. I have no fear of speaking in English.	6	42	38	12	2
9. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous when speaking English.	6	26	26	38	4
10. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.	4	22	24	46	4
11. When speaking English with a stranger, I feel relaxed.	2	22	30	38	8
12. I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English.	8	24	30	30	8

PRCA/ESL SURVEY

		S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
14.	I feel physically uncomfortable when speaking in English class.	4	26	14	38	8
15.	I feel relaxed when speaking in English class.	4	20	28	38	10
16.	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am speaking in English class.	8	24	24	34	10
17.	I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.	2	16	46	22	14
18.	While speaking English in class, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	10	24	10	40.	16

STATE SURVEY

	S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
1. Relaxed	26	34	18	8	14
2. Angry	4			12	66
3. Confident	8	28	36	10	2
4. Nervous	4	10	10	38	20
5. Happy	6	30	38	8	2
6. Tired			6	36	40
7. Frightened	4	10	8	32	30
8. Uneasy		4	8	34	38
9. Energetic	2	20	32	22	6
10. Embarassed	4	8	18	30	20
11. Cheerful	10	44	22	8	2
12. Decisive	4	22	32	20	4
13. Awkward	2	10	10	36	24
14. Friendly Atmosphere	40	38	6		2
15. Calm	18	34	24	10	
16. Entertained	30	30	24	2	
17. Sweating and Shaking			12	20	50
18. Uncertain		14	18	28	24
19. Tense		18	14	28	24
20. Horrified			4	26	54

Note: 16% of the subjects did not appear for the interview, so totals do not equal 100%.

Factor One Bipolar Tension/Relaxation Response

I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English.

	S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
0-0+	3	7	4	3	
1-1+	1	4	2	6	
2-2+	1	2	3	5	2

Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous when speaking English.

0-0+	2	6	5	4	
1-1+	1	4	1	6	
2-2+		1	4	7	1

Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.

0-0+		2	3	11	1
1-1+		3	4	5	1
2-2+	2	5	1	5	

I have no fear of speaking in English class.

0-0+		5	6	6	
1-1+		5	4	3	1
2-2+	4	5	1	3	

I feel relaxed when speaking in English class.

0-0+		7	1	7	2
1-1+	1	2	2	5	2
2-2+		3	1	5	4

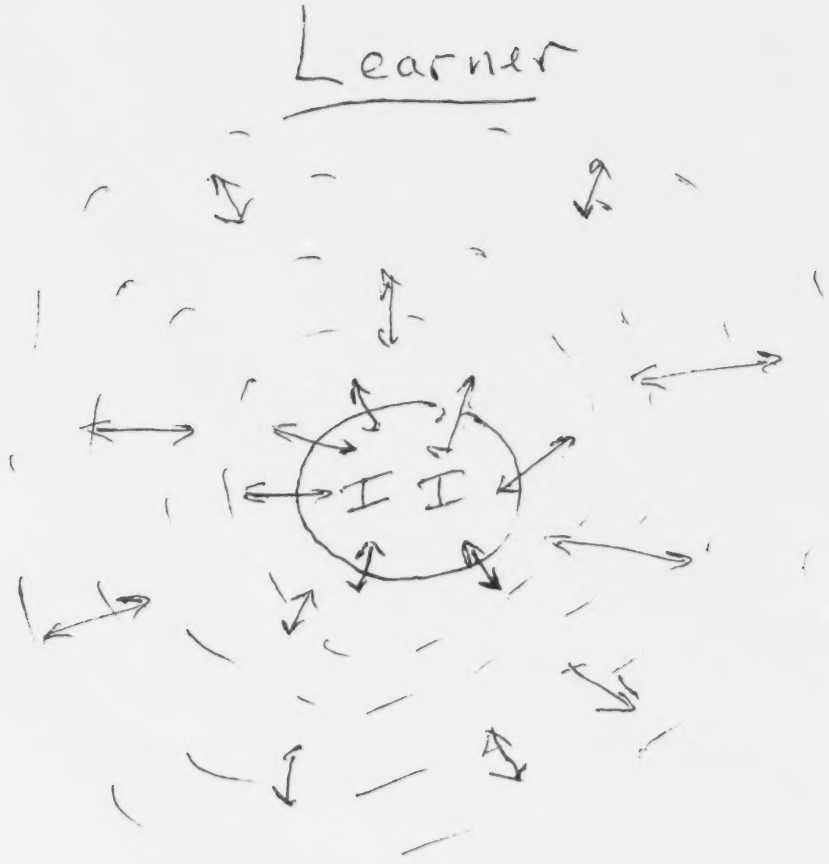
My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am speaking in English. Class.

0-0+	3	6	5	3	
1-1+	1	3	2	6	1
2-2+			4	6	3

I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.

0-0+		2	6	5	4
1-1+		1	8	2	2
2-2+	1	4	5	2	1

Factor Two	Bipolar Tension/Relaxation (Adjectives)				
	S. A.	A.	N. O.	D.	S. D.
Relaxed					
0-0+	2	7	6	2	
1-1+	4	4	3	2	
2-2+	7	6			
Nervous					
0-0+	1	3	4	6	3
1-1+	1	1		8	2
2-2+		1	1	5	5
Frightened					
0-0+	2	2	3	5	5
1-1+		3		7	2
2-2+			1	4	8
Embarassed					
0-0+	1	3	6	4	7
1-1+	1	1	2	6	2
2-2+			1	5	6
Calm					
0-0+	1	6	7	3	
1-1+	1	8	2	2	
2-2+	7	3	2		
Uncertain					
0-0+			7	3	3
1-1+		4	1	6	2
2-2+		3	1	5	7
Tense					
0-0+		5	4	5	3
1-1+		4	1	5	2
2-2+			2	4	7



↔ - interaction

I I: Initial Impression -
modified by interaction and new information about

1. TL objective
2. self-evaluation of performance
3. response to environment

This entire model is perceptual, based on the learner's evaluation of events.